



Portrait of Shushanik Nadirian
by Hakob Hovnatanian (1809-1882)

THE ADVENTURES
OF
HAJJI BABA OF ISPAHAN

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WITH AN
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THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

them ; but, on the contrary, that I had urged them to make a considerable present to the khan. They poured out the whole of their complaints against Shîr Ali, who, they declared, had put the finishing stroke to their misery, and had even torn off the new skin that had begun to cover their old wounds.

All this was slowly working for my advantage, and paving the road to my promotion. The story had got abroad, and was in every one's mouth. I was looked upon as a paragon of moderation.

'This comes from having been a doctor,' says one :
'wisdom is better than riches.'

'He knows the doctrine of consequences,' says another :
'his feet will never be where his head should be.'

In short, I had acquired the reputation of being a clever and a cautious fellow, merely owing to events playing fortunately into my hands ; and I lost nothing from being looked upon as a man whose *taleh* (luck) was good, and one whose star was fortunate.

The result of this part of my history was, that I was installed in the situation of the fugitive, and became the sub-lieutenant to the chief executioner of Persia,—a character, whatever my readers may think of it, of no small consequence, as they will hereafter discover.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Although by trade an executioner, he shows a feeling heart—He meets
with a young man and woman in distress.

THE Shah was at this time engaged in a war with the Moscovites, who had established themselves in Georgia, and were threatening the frontier provinces of Persia, situated between the rivers Kûr and Arras. The governor of Erivan, known by the title of *serdar* or general, and one of the Shah's most favourite officers, had long ago opened the campaign by desultory attacks upon the advanced posts of the enemy, and by laying waste the villages and country in the track they were likely to keep in advancing towards Persia. An army,

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

under the command of the heir-apparent and governor of the great province of Aderbijân, had also been collected near Tabrîz ; and it was intended that he should immediately proceed to the seat of war, in order, if possible, to drive the enemy back to Teflis, and, according to the language of the court, carry its arms even to the walls of Moscow.

Intelligence was daily expected at the royal camp of Sultanieh, from the serdar, concerning an attack which he had announced it his intention to make upon the Russian post of Gavmishlû ; and orders were issued for giving a suitable reception to the heads of the enemy, which it is always the etiquette to send upon announcing a victory, for such, no doubt, was expected to be the result of the attack. A *chapper*, or courier, was at length seen riding towards the camp in great haste. He was the conductor of five horse-loads of heads, 'tis true, and they were heaped up with great pomp and parade before the principal entrance of the royal tents : but it became evident that something had taken place which required a reinforcement ; for on the very next morning our chief, Namerd Khan, was appointed to the command of a body of 10,000 cavalry, which were ordered to march immediately to the banks of the Arras.

The *min bashies*, the heads of thousands ; the *yûz bashies*, the heads of hundreds ; the *on bashies*, the heads of tens ; and all the officers commanding the troops, were seen hurrying over the camp in various directions, attending upon their khans, and receiving their orders. The tent of Namerd Khan was filled with the chiefs of the expedition, to whom he distributed his directions, giving them the order of march, and allotting to each division its station in halting at the villages on the route. My duty was to precede the troops by a day, accompanied by a detachment of nasakchis, to make arrangements for billeting the men in the villages. This was a duty requiring activity and exertion ; but at the same time accompanied by great advantages, which, had I chosen to avail myself of, might have increased the weight of my purse. However, the recent example of Shîr Ali Beg was too strong before my eyes not to repress any desire I might have of levying contributions, so I determined for the present to keep my hands pure, and to quench the flame of covetousness by the waters of prudence.

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

I set off with my detachment, and reached Erivan several days before the troops could arrive. We here found the serdar, who, after his attack upon Gavmishlû, had retreated, to wait the reinforcement of the cavalry under our chief. The army under the prince royal had proceeded to another part of the frontier, with the intention of attacking the fortress of Ganja, of which the enemy had recently acquired possession ; and, unable to spare any of his troops, the serdar had solicited assistance from the Shah.

As soon as Namerd Khan and the serdar had met and consulted, it was determined that spies should immediately be sent forwards in order to ascertain the position and the movements of the Russians ; and I was fixed upon to head a detachment of twenty men on the part of the chief executioner, whilst a similar number was sent by the serdar, who at the same time were to be our guides through such parts of the country as were unknown to me.

We assembled at the close of day, and began our march just as the muezzins called the evening prayer. Proceeding at once to the village of Ashtarek, we passed Etchmiazin, the seat of the Armenian patriarch, on our left. It was scarcely dawn of day when we reached the bridge of Ashtarek, still obscured by the deepest shade, owing to the very high and rocky banks of the river, forming, as it were, two abrupt walls on either side. The village itself, situated on the brink of these banks, was just sufficiently lighted up to be distinguished from the rocks among which it was built ; whilst the ruins of a large structure, of heavy architecture, rose conspicuous on the darkest side, and gave a character of solemnity and grandeur to the whole scenery. This, my companions informed me, was the remains of the many Armenian churches so frequently seen in this part of Persia. The river dashed along through its dark bed, and we could perceive the foam of its waters as we began to cross the bridge. The rattle of our horses' hoofs over its pavement had alarmed the village dogs, whose bark we could just distinguish ; the shrill crow of a cock was also heard, and most of our eyes were directed towards the houses, when one of our men, stopping his horse, exclaimed, 'Ya, Ali ! (oh, Ali !) what is that ?' pointing with his hand to the church : 'do not you see, there, something white ?'

'Yes, yes,' said another, 'I see it : it's a *ghôl* ! without

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

doubt it's a ghôl ! This is the true hour ; it is in search of a corpse. I daresay it is devouring one now.'

I also could see that something was there, but it was impossible to make it out.

We halted upon the bridge, looking up with all our eyes, every one being satisfied that it was a supernatural being. One called upon Ali, another upon Hossein, and a third invoked the Prophet and the twelve Imâms. None seemed inclined to approach it, but every one suggested some new mode of exorcism. 'Untie the string of your trowsers,' said an old Irâki, 'that's the way we treat our ghols, in the desert near Ispahan, and they depart instantly.'

'What good will that do?' answered a *delikhan* (a hare-brained youth) ; 'I'd rather keep the beast out than let it in.'

In short, what with joking, and what with serious talk, the morning broke sufficiently to convince us that the apparition must have been an illusion of our senses, for nothing now was to be seen. However, having passed the bridge, the said *delikhan*, shivering in his stirrups, and anxious to gallop his horse, exclaimed, 'I'll go and find the ghôl,' drove his horse up a steep bank, and made towards the ruined church. We saw him return very speedily, with intelligence, that what we had taken for a ghôl was a woman, whose white veil had attracted our notice ; and that she, with a man, were apparently hiding themselves among the deep shades of the broken walls.

Full of anxiety for whatever might throw a light upon the object of my duty, I lost no time in proceeding to the ruin, in order to ascertain why these people hid themselves so mysteriously ; and, ordering five men to follow me, I made the rest halt near the bridge.

We saw no one until, turning the sharp angle of a wall, we found seated under an arch the objects of our search. A woman, apparently sick, was extended on the ground, whilst a man, leaning over, supported her head in an attitude of the greatest solicitude. Enough of daylight now shone upon them, to discover that they were both young. The woman's face, partially hid by her veil, notwithstanding its deadly paleness, was surprisingly beautiful ; and the youth was the finest specimen of strength, activity, and manliness that I had ever seen. He was dressed in the costume of Georgia ; a long knife hung over his thigh, and a gun rested against the wall. Her veil,

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

which was of the purest white, was here and there stained with blood, and torn in several places. Although I had been living amongst men inured to scenes of misery, utter strangers to feelings of pity or commiseration, yet in this instance I and my companions could not fail being much interested at what we saw, and paused with a sort of respect for the grief of these apparently unfriended strangers, before we ventured to break the silence of our meeting.

‘What are you doing here?’ said I. ‘If you are strangers, and travellers, why do you not go into the village?’

‘If you have the feelings of a man,’ said the youth, ‘give me help, for the love of God! Should you be sent to seize us by the serdar, still help me to save this poor creature who is dying. I have no resistance to offer; but pray save her.’

‘Who are you?’ said I. ‘The serdar has given us no orders concerning you. Where do you come from? Whither going?’

‘Our story is long and melancholy,’ said the young man: ‘if you will help me to convey this poor suffering girl where she may be taken care of, I will relate everything that has happened to us. She may recover with good and kind usage: she is wounded, but I trust not mortally, and with quiet may recover. Thanks to Heaven, you are not one of the serdar’s officers! I entreat you to befriend me, and my lamentable tale may perhaps induce you to take us under your protection.’

This appeal to my feelings was unnecessary: the countenance and appearance of the youth had excited great interest in my breast, and I immediately lent myself to his wishes, telling him that we would, without delay, convey his sick friend to the village, and then, having heard his story, settle what to do for him.

She had to this moment said nothing, but gathered her veil round her with great precaution, now and then uttering low groans, which indicated pain, and venting the apparent misery of her mind by suppressed sighs. I ordered one of my followers to dismount from his horse: we placed her upon it, and immediately proceeded to the village, where, having inspected the interior of several houses, I pitched upon that which afforded the best accommodation, and whose owner appeared obliging and humane; there we deposited her, giving directions that she should be nursed with the greatest care. An

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

old woman of the village, who had the reputation of skill in curing wounds and bruises, was sent for, and she undertook her cure. I learnt from the youth that he and his companion were Armenians ; and as the inhabitants of Ashtarek were of the same persuasion, they very soon understood each other, and the poor sufferer felt that she could not have fallen into better hands.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The history of Yûstûf, the Armenian, and his wife Mariam.

IT was my intention to have proceeded to the heights of Aberan, where we should have found a cool region and good pasturage for our horses, before halting for the day ; but hearing that the wandering tribes, whom we had expected to find encamped in a certain spot, and upon whose tents and provisions I had reckoned, were removed far into the mountains, fearful of the war which had just broken out, I determined to halt at Ashtarek until the heat of the day should have subsided. Accordingly, my men were quartered in different parts of the village : some settled themselves under the arches of the bridge, picketing their horses among the long grass ; one or two took possession of a mill, situated in the bed of the river, whose wheel was turned by water, made to flow in an elevated channel for the purpose ; and I spread my carpet in an open room, built upon a shelf, on the highest part of the rocky bank, from whence I had a view of the whole scene, and also could discern any object that might be coming towards us from the Russian frontier.

Feeling refreshed by two hours' sound sleep, upon awaking I sent for the Armenian youth ; and whilst the good people of the village served us a light breakfast, of which we were both much in need, I requested him to relate his adventures, and particularly what had brought him into the situation in which he had been discovered. Refreshed with rest and food, the morning sun enlightening the spot we occupied, the manly features of the youth exhibited all their beauty ; and, as he spoke, their animation and earnestness helped wonderfully to

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

convince me that all he said was the truth. He spoke as follows :—

‘I am an Armenian by birth, and a Christian ; my name is Yûsûf. My father is chief of the village of Gavmishlû, inhabited entirely by Armenians, situated not far from the beautiful river of Pembaki, and about six agatch from this place. In the middle of a verdant country, full of the richest pasturage, and enjoying a climate celebrated for coolness and serenity, we are a healthy and a hardy race ; and, notwithstanding the numerous exactions of our governors, were happy in our poverty. We live so far within the mountains, that we are more distant from the tyranny usually exercised upon those who abide nearer great towns, the residences of governors ; and, secluded from the world, our habits are simple, and our modes of life patriarchal. I had an uncle, my father’s brother, a deacon, and an attendant upon the head of our church, the patriarch at Etchmiazin ; and another uncle, by my mother’s side, was the priest of our village : therefore my family being well in the church, determined that I should follow the sacred profession. My father himself, who subsisted by tilling the ground, and by his own labour had cleared away a considerable tract near the village, having two sons besides me, expected to receive sufficient help from them in the field, and therefore agreed to spare me for the church. Accordingly, when about ten years old, I went to Etchmiazin to be educated, where I learned to read, write, and perform the church service. I derived great pleasure from instruction, and read every book that came in my way. A very extensive library of Armenian books exists at the convent, of which I managed now and then to get a few ; and although mostly on religious subjects, yet it happened that I once got a history of Armenia, which riveted all my attention ; for I learnt by it that we once were a nation, having kings, who made themselves respected in the world. Reflecting upon our degraded state at the present day, and considering who were our governors, I became full of energy to shake off the yoke, and these feelings turned my thoughts from the sacred profession to which I was destined. About this time war broke out between Persia and Russia, and our village lying in the track of the armies marching to the frontiers, I felt that my family would require every protection possible, and that I should be more usefully employed with

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

them than in a cloister. Accordingly, but a short time before taking priest's orders, I left my friends at Etchmiazin, and returned to my father's house. I was welcomed by every one. Already had they felt the horrors of war; for marauding parties of both Persians and Russians (both equally to be feared) had made their appearance, and molested the peaceable and inoffensive inhabitants of ours and the neighbouring villages. This frontier warfare, in its general results, was of no great utility to either of the powers at war, yet to those who inhabited the seat of it its consequences were dreadful. We were continually harassed either by the fears of the invading enemy, or by the exactions and molestations of the troops of our own government. Our harvests were destroyed, our cattle dispersed, and ourselves in constant danger of being carried away prisoners. Anxious to preserve our property, and our only resource to keep us from starvation, we continued to till our fields, but went to work with swords by our sides, and guns ready loaded slung at our backs; and when a stranger appeared, whoever he might be, we immediately assembled and made a show of defence. By this means, for several years, we managed, with great difficulty and perseverance, to get in our harvest, and, by the blessing of Providence, had enough to subsist upon. But here I must begin some of those particulars which relate to my individual history.

'About two years ago, when securing our harvest, I had gone out long before the dawn to reap the corn of one of our most distant fields, armed and prepared as usual. I perceived a Persian horseman, bearing a female behind him, and making great speed through a glen that wound nearly at the foot of a more elevated spot, upon which I was standing. The female evidently had been placed there against her will, for as soon as she perceived me she uttered loud shrieks, and extended her arms. I immediately flew down the craggy side of the mountain, and reached the lowermost part of the glen time enough to intercept the horseman's road. I called out to him to stop, and seconded my words by drawing my sword, and putting myself in an attitude to seize his bridle as he passed. Embarrassed by the burden behind him, he was unable either to use his sword or the gun slung at his back, so he excited his horse to an increased speed, hoping thus to ride over me; but I stood my ground, and as I made a cut with my sabre,

the horse bounded from the road with so sudden a start, that the frightened woman lost her hold and fell off. The horseman, free of his encumbrance, would now have used his gun ; but, seeing mine already aimed at him, he thought it most prudent to continue his road, and I saw nothing more of him.

‘I ran to the assistance of the fallen woman, whom, by her dress, I discovered to be an Armenian. She was stunned and severely bruised : her outward veil had already disengaged itself ; and in order to give her air, I immediately pulled away the under veil which hides the lower part of the face (common to the Armenians), and, to my extreme surprise, beheld the most beautiful features that imagination can conceive. The lovely creature whom I supported in my arms was about fifteen years of age. Oh ! I shall never forget the thrill of love, delight, and apprehension, which I felt at gazing upon her. I hung over her with all the intenseness of a first passion ; a feeling arose in my heart which was new to me, and, forgetting everything but the object immediately before me, I verily believe that I should have been for ever riveted to that spot, had she not opened her eyes, and began to show signs of life. The first words she spoke went to my very soul ; but when she discovered where she was, and in the hands of an utter stranger, she began to cry and bewail herself in a manner that quite alarmed me. Little by little, however, she became more composed ; and when she found that I was one of her own nation and religion, that I was, moreover, her deliverer, she began to look upon me with different feelings : my vanity made me hope that, perhaps, she was not displeased at the interest she had awakened in me. One thing, however, she did not cease to deplore, and to upbraid me with,—I had withdrawn her veil ;—there was no forgiveness for me :—that indulgence which even a husband scarcely ever enjoys, that distinguishing emblem of chastity and honour, so sacred in the eyes of an Armenian woman,—every sense of decency had been disregarded by me, and I stood before her in the criminal character of one who had seen all her face. In vain I represented, that had I not relieved her mouth and nose from the pressure of the lower band, she must have been suffocated ; that her fall having deprived her of all sensation, had she not inhaled the fresh air, death would have been the consequence. Nothing would convince her that she was not a lost woman.

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

However, the following argument had more effect upon her than any other; no one but myself was witness to her dishonour (if such she must call it); and I swore so fervently by the Holy Cross, and by St. Gregorio, that it should remain a profound secret in my heart as long as I had one to keep it in, that she permitted herself at length to be comforted. I then requested her to give me an account of her late adventure, and to tell me from whom it had been my good fortune to liberate her.

“As for the man,” said she, “all I know of him is, that he is a Persian. I never saw him before, and know of no object that he could have had in carrying me off, excepting to sell me for a slave. A few days ago a skirmish took place between a detachment of Persian cavalry and Georgians. The latter were driven back, and the Persians made some prisoners, whom they carried away in great triumph to Erivan. Our village had been occupied by the Persian troops some days before this affray, and I suppose then my ravisher laid his plan to carry me off, and make me pass for a Georgian prisoner. I had just got up in the morning, and had gone to the village-well with my pitcher to bring home water, when he darted from behind a broken wall, showed his knife, threatening to kill me if I did not follow him without noise, and made me mount behind him on his horse. We galloped away just as some other of the village maidens were proceeding to the well, and my only hope of being saved was from the alarm which I knew they would instantly spread. We were out of sight in a few minutes, for we rode furiously over hill and dale, and cut across parts of the country unfrequented by travellers. At length, seeing you on the brow of the hill, I took courage, and gave vent to my cries, notwithstanding the threats of the Persian. You know the rest.”

‘She had scarcely finished speaking when we discovered several persons, one on horseback, the rest on foot, making towards us in great haste, and as they approached and were recognised by my fair one, it was delightful to watch her emotions.

“Oh! there is my father,” exclaimed she, “and my brothers! there is Ovanes, and Agoop, and Aratoon! and my uncle too!”

‘As they came up she embraced them all with transports

of delight. I was in agonies of apprehension lest some youth should appear, who might have excited other feelings in her heart; but no, none but relations were there. They explained to her that the alarm of her seizure had been spread throughout the village by her young friends; that luckily they had not yet gone to the fields, and the family horse was at home, upon which her father was instantly mounted. They had traced the fresh footsteps of her ravisher's horse as long as he kept the road, had marked the place where he turned from it, had seen them again in several places, had tracked him through a cornfield that led up a steep slope, and at length, from a high summit, Ovanes had seen them descending a glen, which must have been very near the spot where they had now found her.

'She said all this was true, and again thanked God and St. Gregory for her escape; and, after some hesitation, in a most embarrassed manner, pointed me out as her deliverer. The attention of the whole party was then directed to me. "Whose son are you?" said the old man, her father.

"I am the son of Coja Petros," said I, "the chief of the village of Gavmishlû."

"Ah! he is my friend and neighbour," answered he; "but I do not know you; perhaps you are the son who was educating at the Three Churches for a priest, and who came to the help of your family?"

'I answered in the affirmative, and then he said, "You are welcome. May your house prosper! You have saved our daughter, and we owe you eternal gratitude. You must come with us and be our guest. If ever it were necessary to kill a lamb, to eat and be merry, it is now. We, and all our families, will carry you upon our heads; we will kiss your feet, and smooth your brow, for having saved our Mariam, and preserved her from dragging out her existence the slave of the Mussulman."

'I then received the congratulations and kind speeches of her brothers and uncle, who all invited me to their village in so pressing a manner, that, unable to resist, and propelled by my anxiety to see Mariam, I accepted their offer, and we forthwith proceeded in a body.

'As we were winding down the side of one of the mountains, Mariam's village, for such I shall call it, was pointed out to me, situated among trees, snugly seated in a warm nook, protected from every wind but the east, which here coming

from the *Kulzum*, or the Caspian Sea, is delightfully cool and serene. Beyond was the Pembaki river, winding its way through a beautiful valley, diversified by rich vegetation ; and at a greater distance we could just discern the church of Kara Klisseh, or the Black Monastery, the first station of the Russians on this part of their frontier, and situated on a dark and precipitous rock, rising conspicuous among the verdure of the surrounding scenery.

‘When near the village we discovered that all its inhabitants, particularly the women and children, had been watching our steps down the slope, anxious to know whether Mariam had been retaken ; and when they saw her safe, there was no end to their expressions of joy. The story of her flight and of her rescue was soon told, and carried from one mouth to another with such rapidity and with such additional circumstances, that at length it came out that she had been carried away by a giant, who had an iron head, claws and feet of steel, and scales on his back, mounted upon a beast that tore up the ground at every bound, and made noises in its rapid course over the hills like the discharges of artillery. They added to this, that of a sudden an angel, in the shape of a ploughboy, descended from the top of a high mountain in a cloud, and as he wielded a sword of fire in his hand, it frightened the horse, threw Mariam to the ground, and reduced the giant and his steed to ashes : for when she recovered from her fright, they were no longer to be seen. I was pointed out as the illustrious ploughboy, and immediately the attention of the whole village was turned towards me ; but, unfortunately, when about receiving nearly divine honours, a youth, whom I had frequently met tending cattle in the mountains, recognised me, and said, “He is no angel—he is Yûsûf, the son of Coja Petros, of Gavmishlû” ; and thus I was reduced to my mortality once more. However, I was treated with the greatest distinction by everybody, and Mariam’s relations could not sufficiently testify their gratitude for the service I had rendered. But, all this time, love was making deep inroads in my heart. I no longer saw Mariam unveiled, that happy moment of my life had gone by ; but it had put the seal to my future fate. “No,” said I to myself, “nothing shall separate me from that beautiful maid ; our destinies forthwith are one ; Heaven has miraculously brought us together, and nothing but the decrees of Providence shall disunite us,

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

even though to gain her I should be obliged to adopt the violence of the Persian, and carry her away by force." We met now and then, Mariam and I ; and although our words were few, yet our eyes said much, and I knew that my passion was returned. Oh, how I longed to have met and engaged another, ay, twenty more Persians, to prove my love ! but I recollected that I was nothing but a poor Armenian, belonging to a degraded and despised nation, and that the greatest feat which I could ever expect to perform would be to keep the wolf from my father's flocks, or to drive the marauder from our fields.

'I remained the whole of that eventful day at Geuklû (the name of the village), where the promised lamb was killed, and a large caldron of rice boiled. I returned on the following day to my parents, who had been alarmed at my absence, and who listened to the history of my adventures with all the earnestness and interest that I could wish.

'I was so entirely absorbed by my love, that I could think of nothing else ; therefore I determined to inform them of the situation of my affections. "I am of an age now," said I to them, "to think and act for myself. Thanks to God, and to you, I have strong arms, and can work for my bread ; I wish to marry, and Providence has prepared the way for me."

'I then requested them forthwith to demand Mariam from her parents, in order that I might make her my wife ; and finished by kissing my father's hand, and embracing my mother.

'They said in answer, "that marriage was a serious consideration in these difficult times, and that the family was now too poor to incur the expense of a wedding. It was necessary to buy clothes, a ring, candles, sweetmeats, a crimson veil, bed and bed-covering, to pay the singers and musicians, and to make a feast ; and where was money to be found to meet all this ?"

'I said, "'Tis true that money is wanted, and that no marriage can take place without it, both for the honour of our family, and for the purpose of showing my love to my intended ; but I can borrow ; I have friends both at Erivan and at the Three Churches ; and I think I could borrow enough from the one and the other to pay the expenses of my wedding ; and as for repayment I will work so laboriously and live so frugally,

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

that little by little I shall pay off my debt. Besides, I can become the servant of a merchant, who would give me a share in his adventures; and one journey to Constantinople or to Astrachan would yield me enough profit to repay every one with interest."

'In short, I said so much, that at length they were persuaded to make the necessary overtures to the parents of Mariam; and it was fixed, that in the course of a few days my father, my uncle the priest, and one of the elders of the village, should proceed to Geuklû, and ask her in marriage for me. In the meanwhile, I myself had been there almost every day, upon one pretext or another, and I had had several opportunities of informing her of my intentions, in order that she and her family might not be taken unawares.

'My father and his colleagues were very well received by the parents of my intended. Having talked over the matter, and seizing this opportunity of drinking some more than usual glasses of arrack, they agreed that we should be united as soon as the marriage-articles should have been agreed upon, and the forms of the *nâm zed* (the ceremony of betrothing) should have been gone through.

'Three days after this, my mother, accompanied by two old women of our village, by my uncle the priest, and me, proceeded to Geuklû for the purposes of the *nâm zed*, and settling the terms of the marriage. They were received with more ceremony than my father and his colleagues had been, and the women of the other party having met ours, negotiations were opened.

'My mother offered, on my part, that I should give of clothes to my bride two full suits, consisting of two shifts, one of crimson silk, the other of blue cotton; two pair of trowsers, one of silk, the other of striped cotton; two *jubbeks*, or robes, fitting tight to the body, of chintz; two veils, one of white cotton, the other of checkered blue; two pair of slippers, one of green shagreen skin and high heels, the other of brown leather, with flat bone heels and shod with iron: and I was also to add a printed muslin handkerchief, and a set of bandages and kerchiefs for the head. She, moreover, offered fifty piastres in silver coin for minor expenses; and a chain for the neck, from which there should be suspended one gold tomaun of Persia.

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

‘After some little consultation among the friends of my wife, this was agreed upon ; but one of the old women who had been a servant in a Persian family, started a demand which gave rise to some discussion ; it was, that I ought to give something for *sheer baha*, or milk money, as is the custom throughout Persia. Our party said this was not usual among the Armenians ; the adverse party contended it was ; in short, words were running high, when I requested my mother not to make any difficulty, but to offer ten piastres more ; which being agreed upon, the whole was amicably adjusted to the satisfaction of both parties.

‘This had taken place among the women alone. I was then called in with my uncle to go through the ceremony, and strict injunctions were made me not to laugh, nor even to smile, while it lasted ; for ill luck would attend the marriage if anything so indecorous took place at the first interview.

‘I found my mother seated on the ground flanked by her two old women, opposite to my bride’s mother, supported by hers. Mariam entered at the same moment, and my mother then presented her with a ring (a brass one, alas !) from me, which she put on her finger, and then wine was administered to the priest ; of which, when he had taken a copious draught, it was announced that we were betrothed man and wife, and we received the congratulations of all those around us. I was delighted, although prohibited from communicating with my intended, but went about kissing everybody ; and so many benedictions were showered upon us, that perhaps no couple ever was so much blessed, by good wishes at least, as we were.

‘My mother and her party having returned to our village, I proceeded to make the preparations for my wedding with a light heart, regardless of any event which might intervene to destroy it. When we came to discuss the money it was likely to cost, and the means of obtaining it, I was agreeably surprised to see my father walk into the room where the family was assembled, with a bag in his hand. “Here,” said he, “here is money. After all, the *ked khoda* of *Gavmishlû* can provide for his son as well as the best he in the country. Here, *Yûsûf*,” said he to me, “take these ten tomauns, my son, and lay them out in the purchase of your wife’s clothes.”

‘Upon which I knelt down, kissed his hand, and craved his blessing.

‘My uncle, the priest, warmed by this generosity, said, “And here, nephew,—the church is poor, indeed, and its ministers poorer,—but here—take these twenty silver abassis, and expend them in tapers for your wedding.” Others of those seated in the assembly also gave me something; by which means, without being reduced to the necessity of borrowing, I found my purse sufficiently well supplied to enable me to make my purchases at once. I expressed my thanks to my benefactors; and never before having had so much money in my possession, I scarcely knew what countenance to keep. However, my impatience knew no bounds; I was anxious to be already on my road to Erivan, where the clothes were to be bought; for there was no place nearer than that city in which a bazar was to be found. But as I was ignorant of the arts of buying, and particularly ill versed in women’s dresses, it was decided that my mother should accompany me mounted on our ass, whilst I followed on foot. She had an Armenian friend at Erivan, who would take us in for a night or two; and as for sleeping on the road, we could take up our abode in the tents of the wandering tribes, whose duties bind them to hospitality towards the stranger.

‘We departed, she on the ass, I with my sword by my side, and my gun on my shoulder; and followed by half the village, invoking good luck for us.

‘Having reached the heights of Aberan, we discovered an immense camp of white tents; one of which, belonging to the chief, was of a magnificent size. A horseman whom we met informed us that the serdar of Erivan was encamped there with a considerable body of cavalry; and it was supposed posted there to watch the motions of the Russians and Georgians, who, it was expected, were likely soon to move their forces forwards to the attack of Persia.

‘This intelligence gave us considerable alarm. My mother was for returning home, and for putting off the wedding. Too much in love to hearken to such a proposal, I urged her to travel more expeditiously, that we might be back the sooner. We proceeded so far on the first day, that I could see the smoke of Erivan in the distance. We passed the night under a projecting rock, with the majestic mountain of Ararat in full view; and did not fail to cross ourselves when we first came in view of it, and of recommending ourselves to St. Gregorio,

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

when we composed ourselves to sleep. The wandering tribes had gone too far out of our track for our purpose, therefore we did not think of seeking their protection ; but, refreshed with our night's rest, we resumed our journey early in the morning, and reached Erivan in safety.

‘My mother was received by her friend with kindness ; and the day after our arrival, they went to the bazar to make purchases of the wedding-clothes, whilst I roamed about, gaping at everything, and listening to the speeches of those who were gathered together on the market-place. Various were the rumours concerning the operations of the serdar against the enemy. It was evident that some movement was likely soon to take place, and an attack of an extraordinary nature to be made ; for the people at the arsenal and powder-works had been more than usually employed in making ready certain instruments¹ of destruction, before unknown in Persia, and set on foot by Russian deserters themselves. I was so entirely taken up by my own affairs, and by the happiness in store for me, that this sort of intelligence passed by me totally unheeded. It just struck me, that we might endeavour to secure the protection of the serdar, through our chief at the Three Churches, in case our village and its territory became the theatre of war ; but when I reflected upon the length of time it would take to make such a deviation from our road, I abandoned the idea, and, in my impatience, trusted to my own sword and musket as sufficient protection against all invaders.

‘My mother and I returned to our village by the same road we came, but not with quite so much speed ; for the ass was laden with our purchases, and, in addition to my arms, I also carried a considerable share of the burden. The serdar's camp was still in the same place, and we passed on without hindrance, or any occurrence worth relating, until we reached the high ground that overlooks Gavmishlû.

‘The sight of a tent first struck my mother, and she stopped.

“‘What is that, Yûsûf ?” she cried out to me ; “see, there is a tent.”

‘I, who had no thoughts in my head but those that concerned my wedding, answered, “Yes, I see ; perhaps they are making preparations for an entertainment for us.”

¹ It is supposed that the instruments here alluded to were hand-grenades.

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

“My husband’s beard with your entertainment !” exclaimed she : “what are become of your wits ? Either Russians or Persians are there, as sure as I am a Christian ; and in either case it is bad for us.”

‘We pushed on towards our dwelling with the greatest anxiety ; and as we approached it, found that my mother had judged right. The village had been just occupied by a small detachment of Russian infantry, composed of fifty men, commanded by a *penjah bashi*, or a head of fifty, who, it seems, formed the advanced posts of an army quartered at a day’s distance from us. Every house in the village had been obliged to lodge a certain number of men, and ours, as the best, and belonging to the chief, was taken up by the captain.

‘You may conceive our consternation on finding this state of things ; and, in particular, how wretched I was from the apprehension that my wedding must be put off to an indefinite time, when perhaps ruin would have overwhelmed us, and left us naked and destitute fugitives. Oh ! the idea was too overwhelming, and I hastened to give vent to my feelings to my friends at Geuklû, who perhaps might afford me some consolation. Their village being considerably out of the track of the invaders, no troops had yet made their appearance amongst them ; but when they heard what was passing on our side of the country, they immediately became partakers of all our fears. I saw Mariam, dear child of nature ! The customs of our country did not permit us to converse openly ; but love is fertile in expedients, and we managed to pour out eternal vows of constancy, and to swear upon the holy cross of our faith, that, happen what might, we would ever be united.

‘These interviews happened frequently, and I became almost mad with rage and disappointment that we could not marry. It was evident that some terrible catastrophe must take place soon,—the armies might meet from day to day, and then what would become of the rejoicings of our wedding-day ! To undertake the performance of a ceremony of such importance, under these circumstances, would only be mocking Providence, and preparing for ourselves a futurity of misfortune. However, I was too much in love, and too impatient, not to have married under any circumstances, therefore I only endured what I could not well resist.

‘However, a fortnight had elapsed since our return, and

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

nothing had happened. We were upon excellent terms with our guests the Russians ; and as they were quiet and inoffensive, infinitely more so than Persians would have been under similar circumstances, we became very intimate. They were Christians as well as we ; they made the sign of the cross ; prayed at our church ; eat pork and drank wine ; all circumstances producing great sympathy of feeling, and strengthening the bonds of friendship between us. Their captain was a young man of great worth, and of such unpresuming manners that he gave universal satisfaction. He kept the strictest discipline among his troops, and was himself the soberest of mankind. He was anxious to gain information concerning our manners and customs, and encouraged us to converse with him upon everything that interested our family. This brought on a full exposition of our situation in regard to my wedding, to which he listened with a degree of interest so great, as to make him my friend for life.

‘He said, “But why should it not take place now ? There is nothing to hinder it : we are here to protect you, and whatever we can give or lend, I promise that I will procure. The Persians do not show the least sign of moving, and our army must wait for reinforcements from Teflis before it can advance farther ; therefore you will have all the necessary time to perform your ceremonies in quiet and happiness, and perhaps with more splendour than if we had not been here.”

‘He, moreover, promised to make a present to the bride of some Georgian gold lace, and to lend me his horse, a fine Karadaghi, which I might mount on the occasion. He said so much, that he at length persuaded mine and my bride’s relations not to defer the ceremony, and a day was fixed. Had any other man pressed the business so much, and appeared so personally interested in it, I should probably have been suspicious of the purity of his intentions, and certain feelings of jealousy might have arisen ; but the captain was so ugly, so hideously ugly, so opposite to what passes for beauty amongst us, that I could have no fear concerning Mariam on his account ; for if she could notice him, she could with the same facility become enamoured of an ape. His face was composed of a white leprous skin, with a head covered by hair, or rather quills, thrown about in a variety of stiff lines, of the colour of straw ; his eyes were round holes scooped deep in

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

their sockets, and situated behind small hillocks of cheek-bones ; his nose was marked by a little bit of flesh, under which were pierced two holes as if with an awl, and his chin, as lucid as glass, did not show the smallest appearance of hair. A little down grew upon his upper lip, which for length and prominence quite outdid its fellow ; and this indication of a man was as carefully kept greased and blacked as a pair of immense boots in which his legs were always cased.

““No,” said I to myself, “Mariam would sooner love her Persian giant than this creature ; and when she comes to compare him to her intended (looking over myself at the same time with some complacency), I flatter myself that I may lay my jealous fears aside.”

‘And thus it was settled that I should wed. The evening before the wedding-day, the clothes and other articles, placed in trays borne upon men’s heads, and preceded by singers and musicians (of which some are to be found in every village), were sent to my bride. My band consisted of a man who played on the *zourna*, or hautbois, a performer on the tambourine, and two who sang. As a mark of additional splendour, our Russian friends lent us a drum, the beating of which by one of our shepherd-boys produced great effect all over the country. I followed my present a few hours after, for the purpose of receiving the one which my bride, according to custom, was to make me ; consisting of a pair of brass-mounted pistols, made in the Caucasus, which had belonged to a great uncle of hers, who had been a soldier in the troops of the *Wali* of Georgia, before the Russians had got possession of that country.

‘On the following day, the day of my long-expected happiness, I and all my family arose betimes in the morning. The weather was serene but sultry ; there had been a tendency to storm for several days before, and heavy clouds stood in threatening attitudes with their white heads in the horizon. But nature was beautiful and refreshed by a shower that had fallen in the night. My friend, the captain, lent me his horse, which I caparisoned and ornamented as well as I could on the occasion. I myself put on a new suit of clothes from head to foot ; and with the addition of many silver-studded belts, cartouch-boxes, daggers, and other appendages fastened about me, and which had been lent me by a Georgian in the service

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

of the Russians, I was told, and I believe it, that I made a very handsome appearance. Accompanied by my male relations, the Russian captain, and as many of his men as could be spared in order to create a crowd, we proceeded to Geuklû, and approaching it, marshalled ourselves in procession, preceded by music, songs, and shouts. We alighted at my bride's house, where we partook of refreshments, and received the congratulations of all the village ; and then, when everything was prepared for our return to Gavmishlû, where my uncle was to perform the ceremony, we mounted again. My bride, covered by a crimson veil from head to foot, which flowed over a flat platter placed on her crown, was mounted on her father's steed, led on either side by her brothers. It is the custom for the bridegroom to hold a sash or girdle by his right hand, which is held at the other end by the bride, on their way to the church, and this we did. All our friends, our relations, all the youth of the villages, some on foot, some on asses, others on horses, accompanied the procession, making shouts, and manifesting their joy by all sorts of games and jokes during the whole course of the march. When at length we had reached a small rising ground overlooking my village, the procession stopped, and every one who had a part to act in the ceremony received a taper, which was forthwith lighted. The procession then moved on with slow and measured steps, headed by my uncle, who, assisted by my other uncle from the Three Churches, sang psalms as they walked forwards, amidst all the noise of the surrounding lookers-on. The Russian captain had had the attention to dress his men up on the occasion, and they marched to the church with us, adding much to the dignity of the scene.

‘We at length alighted at the door of the church, and, still holding each end of the girdle, my bride and I walked to the foot of the altar, which, notwithstanding our humble condition, had been ornamented with more than ordinary brilliancy by flowers, ribands, and looking-glasses. My forehead was then placed against Mariam's in a sort of butting attitude, and the Bible opened and laid upon our heads, whilst her hand was given into mine. The priest then asked, if we agreed to take each other for husband and wife ; and after we had made an inclination of our heads as marking our consent, and a suitable proportion of prayers had been read and chanted, the ceremony

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

was at an end, and notified to all the world by the shouts of the multitude, and by the redoubled sounds of our drums, flutes, and tambours.

‘Daylight by this time had entirely disappeared, and the weather, which had threatened a storm, now became very lowering. The sky was darkened, rain fell, and distant thunders were heard. This circumstance put an end to the entertainment given by my father earlier than it otherwise would have done; and when our guests had retired, the hour at length arrived which was to make me the happiest of men.

‘Oh! shall I stop here to recollect all the horrors of that night, or shall I pass on, and not distress you by relating them? You must conceive my bride lovely as the morning star, innocent as an angel, and attached to me by the purest love; and you may imagine what I felt at that moment,—I who had looked upon our union as impossible, and had thought of my awaiting happiness as a bright spot in my existence, to which I expected never to attain.

‘But in order to give a right impression of the scene which I am about to describe, you must know that the villages in Georgia, and in our part of Armenia, are built partly underground, and thus a stranger finds himself walking on the roof of a house when he thinks that he is on plain ground, the greatest part of them being lighted by apertures at the top. Such was the house in which my family lived, and in which my wedding was celebrated. My nuptial chamber had one of these apertures, which had been closed on the occasion, and was situated with its door leading at once into the open air.

‘It is the custom among the Armenians for the bridegroom to retire first. His shoes and stockings are then taken off by his wife; and, before she resigns her veil, has the task of extinguishing the light. The storm had just broke,—thunders were rolling over our heads,—the lightning flashed,—torrents of rain were pouring down with fearful noise,—there seemed to be a general commotion of the elements, when my Mariam, unveiling herself, extinguished the lamp. She had scarcely laid herself down, when we heard an unusual violent noise at the aperture in the ceiling: sounds of men’s voices were mingled with the crash of the thunder; trampling of horses was also distinctly heard; and presently we were alarmed by



'An explosion took place in the very room.'

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THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

a heavy noise of something having fallen in our room and near our bed, accompanied by a glare and a smell of sulphur.

“‘Tis a thunderbolt, by all that is sacred! Oh, Heaven protect us!” cried I. “Fly, my soul, my wife, escape!”

She had just time to snatch up her veil, and to get without the door, when an explosion took place in the very room, so awful, so tremendous, that I immediately thought myself transported to the regions of the damned. I fell senseless, amidst the wreck of falling stones, plaster, and furniture. All I can recollect is, that an immense blaze of light was succeeded by an overpowering sulphureous smell,—then a dead silence.

‘I lay there for some time, unconscious of what was passing; but by degrees came to myself, and when I found that I could move my limbs, and that nothing about my person was materially hurt, I began to consider how I had got there. As for my wedding, that appeared to me a dream: all I heard about me now was the firing of muskets, loud and frequent explosions, cries and shouts of men,—of men wounded and in pain,—of men attacking and putting others to death,—the tramlings of horses, the clashing of arms. “What in the name of Heaven can all this be?” said I. I still thought myself transported into another planet, when the shriek of a woman struck my ear. “It is Mariam! It is she, by all that is sacred! Where, where shall I seek her?” I was roused: I disencumbered myself of the weight of rubbish that had fallen upon me, and, once upon my legs again, I sallied forth in search of her. The scene which presented itself was more terrible than language can express; for the first object which struck my sight was a Persian rushing by me, with a drawn sword in one hand, and a human head, dripping with blood, in another. The blackness of the night was lighted up at rapid intervals by vivid flashes of lightning, which, quick as the eye could glance, now discovered the hideous tragedy that was then acting, and now threw it again into darkness, leaving the imagination to fill up the rest. By one flash, I saw Persians, with uplifted swords, attacking defenceless Russians, rushing from their beds: by another, the poor villagers were discovered flying from their smoking cottages in utter dismay. Then an immense explosion took place,

which shook everything around.¹ The village cattle, loosened from their confinements, ran about in wild confusion, and mixed themselves with the horrors of the night : in short, my words fall short of any description that could be made of this awful scene of devastation ; and I must bless the mercy of that almighty hand which hath spared me in the destruction that surrounded me.

‘I knew not where to turn myself to seek for my wife. I had heard her shrieks ; and the shivering of despair came over me, when I thought it might have been her death groans which had struck my ears. I threw myself into the midst of the carnage, and, armed with a firebrand, snatched from my burning nuptial chamber, I made my way through the combatants, more like a maniac at the height of his frenzy, than a bridegroom on his wedding-night. Getting into the skirts of the village again, I thought I heard the shrieks of my beloved. I ran towards the direction, and a flash of lightning, that glanced over the adjoining hill, showed me two horsemen making off with a woman, whose white veil was conspicuously seen, mounted behind one of them. Heedless of everything but my wife, I followed them with the swiftness of a mountain goat ; but as the storm subsided, the lightning flashed no more, and I was left in utter darkness at the top of the hill, not knowing which path to take, and whether to proceed or not. I was almost naked. I had been severely bruised. My feet, otherwise accustomed to the naked ground, had become quite lacerated by the pursuit I had undertaken ; and altogether, I was so worn with grief, so broken-hearted, that I laid myself down on the wet earth in a state of desperation that was succeeded by a torpor of all my senses. Here I lay until the first rays of the morning glared in my eyes, and brought me gradually to a sense of my situation.

“What has happened ?” said I : “Where am I ? How came I here ? Either the demons and wicked angels of another world have been at work this night, or else I am most grossly abused. To see that glorious orb rising in that clear unclouded sky ; to mark the soothing serenity of nature, the morning freshness, the song of the birds, the lowing of yon

¹ Hassan Khan Serdar, the governor of Erivan, was said to have attacked Armenian villages in the manner here described, by throwing grenades into the houses from the orifice at the top.

cattle, and the quiet and seclusion of my yonder paternal village, I ought to suppose that the images of horror, of indescribable horror, now floating in my mind, must be those of a diseased imagination. Is it possible that in this secluded spot, under this lovely sky, in the midst of these bounteous gifts of nature, I could have seen man murdering his fellow-creature, the blazing cottage, the mangled corse, the bleeding head,—and, O cruel, O killing thought! that I should have been bereft of my dear, my innocent wife?" and then, then only, was I restored to a full possession of every occurrence that had taken place; and tears which before had refused to flow now came to my assistance, and relieved my burning temples and my almost suffocating bosom. I got up, and walked slowly to the village. All was hushed into quiet; a slight smoke was here and there to be seen; stray cattle were grazing on the outskirts; strangers on horseback seemed to be busily employed in preparations of some kind or other, and the wretched peasantry were seen huddled together in groups, scarcely awake from the suddenness of the destruction which had visited them, and uncertain of the fate which might still be in reserve. As for me, the loss which I had already sustained made me expect every other attendant misfortune. I had made my mind up to find my relations dead, to see the total ruin of our house, and to know that I was a solitary outcast on the face of the world, without a wife, without a home, without parents, without a friend. But no; imagination had worked up the picture too highly; for one of the first persons I met on entering our village was my poor mother, who, when she saw me, recollecting all the trouble she had been at to secure my happiness, fell on my neck, and shed a torrent of tears. When her first grief had subsided, she told me that my father had suffered much from bruises, and from a blow received on the head: but that the rest of the family were well; that our house had been considerably injured, many of our things pillaged, and that my nuptial room, in particular, had been almost totally destroyed. She informed me that the good Russian captain had been the first to fall a sacrifice to the attack of the Persians; for almost immediately after the explosion in my room he had rushed out to see what had happened, when two Persians seized him, one of whom at once decapitated him: this was the head that I saw

brandished before me, when first I sallied forth. She then took me to a place of shelter, and put on me what clothes could be found.

‘The Persians, having completed their deeds of horror, had retired from the scene of action, leaving to our unfortunate villagers the melancholy task of burying the dead bodies of thirty wretched Russians, who had fallen victims to their treacherous attack, and whose heads they had carried off with them as trophies.

‘After I had visited my father, and left my home in as comfortable a situation as I could, under the existing circumstances, I determined instantly to set out in pursuit of my wife. It was evident that she had been carried away by some of those who had attacked our village, and that she must have been taken to Erivan, as the nearest market for slaves, for such was no doubt the purpose for which she had been seized. My sword, pistols, and gun, which had formed part of the ornamental furniture of my bridal chamber, were found buried in its ruins; and with these for my protection, and with some pieces of silver in my purse, I bid adieu to Gavmishlû, making a vow never to return until I had found my Mariam.

‘I travelled with hurried steps, taking the shortest cuts over the mountains to Erivan; and as I crossed a branch of the high road I met two horsemen, well mounted and equipped, who stopped me, and asked whither I was going, and upon what errand.

‘I did not hesitate to tell them my wretched tale, hoping they might give me some hint which might throw light upon the fate of my wife. This they did, indeed, but in a manner so cruel, that their words awakened the most horrid suspicions, and almost to a certainty convinced me that my poor innocent, my hitherto unspotted, though wedded wife, had fallen into the power of a most licentious tyrant.

“‘Is it possible,” said I, when they had related to me the horrid expedients to which their chief, the serdar (for it was to two of his bodyguard that I was talking), had recourse, for the accomplishment of his wickedness,—“is it possible that selfishness can be carried to such an extreme, that vice can have reached to such a pitch in the heart of man? Women, by you Mussulmans, I know are treated as mere accessories to pleasure; but, after all, they are God’s creatures, not made

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

for the serdar alone, as he seems to think, but given to us to be our help, our comfort, and our companions through life."

'My hearers only laughed at my sentiments, and tauntingly assured me, that, if I was seeking one who had got into the serdar's harem, my labour would be in vain, and that I might just take the trouble to return whence I came.

'Little heeding what they said, I hastened my steps, without knowing why or wherefore, but impelled by a sort of feeling, that it could not be in the wisdom of the Almighty to heap such a load of misfortune upon a wretched sinner like me, without at length giving some counterbalancing reward, or some consolation which it is ever in His power to bestow.

'I was now near the camp at Aberan, where I knew the serdar in person was settled, and, hoping to hear some favourable intelligence, I made towards it. It was greatly agitated by the arrival of the detachment of Persians who had attacked our village, and were giving proofs of the success of their enterprise, by exhibiting the Russian heads which they had brought away, and which were laid in several heaps before the tent of the chief. One might have supposed that a great and signal victory had been achieved, such were the rejoicings and boastings that took place at the sight. The horrid objects were forthwith salted, and sent off in great parade and ceremony to the Shah of Persia, who never will believe that a victory is gained until he sees these palpable proofs of it. However, in the midst of all this joy, a courier was seen arriving in great haste from the Russian frontier, whose intelligence produced a change of scene. He announced that the Russian army, having heard of the late attack upon their outpost at Gavmishlû, was now in full march against the serdar, and coming on so rapidly, that he must expect to be attacked even before night-close. The scene that ensued defies all description. The whole camp was ordered to be struck, and an immediate retreat was commanded. Tents falling, mules loading, men screaming; horses, camels, men, cannon, all were in motion at one time; and before two hours had elapsed, the whole had disappeared, and the army was on its march for Erivan.

'I had in the meanwhile received no account of my lost Mariam; and it was plain, that, if in the power of the serdar, she was within the walls of his seraglio at Erivan. Thither, then,

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

I bent my steps, hoping that in this great confusion something might turn up for my advantage.

‘Upon my arrival there, I posted myself at the bridge over the Zengui, from whence I had a full survey of that part of the serdar’s palace which contains his women; and as the troops were crossing it at the same time in constant succession, I was unnoticed, and passed for one of the camp followers. The building is situated upon the brink of a precipice of dark rock, at the foot of which flows the Zengui, a clear and rapid stream, foaming through a rocky bed, the stony projections of which form white eddies, and increase the rush of its waters. A bridge of three arches is here thrown over it, and forms part of the high road leading to Georgia and Turkey. The principal saloon of the palace, in a corner of which the serdar is usually seated, opens with a large casement on the river, and overlooks the rugged scenery. At some distance on the same surface of building are the windows of the women’s apartments, distinguished by their lattices, and by other contrivances of jealousy. However, I observed they were not so well secured, but that objects passing and repassing the bridge might well be seen from them; and I imagined that if Mariam was a prisoner there, she might perchance make me out as I stood below. “But if she did, what then?” said I to myself in despair: “seeing me there would only add to her torture, and to my desperation.” To escape from such a height appeared impossible, for a fall would be instant death; and excepting a willow tree, which grew out of the rock immediately under one of the windows, there was nothing to break the descent. However, having remained in one spot so long in meditation, I feared to be observed, and left my post for the present, determining to return to it at the close of day, and indeed at every hour when I could appear without suspicion.

‘I had been watching the windows of the seraglio in this manner for more than a fortnight, and had not ceased to parade up and down the bridge at least three times every day, when one evening, as the day was about to close, I saw the lattice of the window over the willow tree open, and a female looking out of it. I watched her with breathless suspense. She appeared to recognise me. I extended my hand; she stretched forth hers. “It is she!” said I; “yes, it must be her! it is my Mariam!” Upon which, without a moment’s hesita-

tion, without thinking of the consequences, I plunged into the river, and having waded through it, stood at the foot of the precipice immediately under my beloved wife. She stretched her arms several times towards me, as if she would have thrown herself out. I almost screamed with apprehension ; and yet the hope of pressing her to my heart made me half regret that she had not done so. We stood there looking wistfully at each other, fearing to speak, yet longing to do so. At length she shut the lattice suddenly, and left me in an attitude and in all the horrors of suspense. I kept my post for some time without seeing anything more of her, when again suddenly the lattice opened, and she appeared, but with looks that spoke intense agitation. I scarcely could tell what was about to happen, but waited in dreadful anxiety, until I saw her lean forward, retreat, lean forward again,—then more and more, until, by a sudden effort, I beheld her fair form in the air, falling down the giddy height.¹ My legs refused to perform their office, my eyes were obscured by a swimming, and I should have probably sunk under the intenseness of my feelings, when I saw her half suspended, half falling, from a branch of the willow tree. I bounded up, and in an instant had mounted the tree, and had clasped her senseless in my arms. I seemed to be impelled by new vigour and strength ; to reach the ground, to recross the river, to fly with my precious burden from the inhabited outskirts into the open country, appeared but the business of a second. I was perfectly drunk with the thousand feelings which agitated me ; and although I acted like one bereft of his senses, yet everything I did was precisely that which I ought to have done. Nature guided me : the animal acting only from instinct would have done like me. I had saved that which was most precious to me in this world.

‘When I had worn out my first efforts of strength, and had felt that my hitherto senseless burden showed some symptoms of life, I stopped, and placed her quietly on the ground behind some broken walls. She was terribly bruised, although no bone had been broken. The branches of the tree, upon which she had alighted, had wounded her deeply in several places, and the blood had flowed very copiously. But she was alive ; she breathed : she opened her eyes, and at length pronounced my name. I was almost crazy with joy, and embraced her

¹ This is a circumstance which is said to have really happened.



'I beheld her fair form in the air, falling down the giddy height.'

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

with a fervour that amounted to madness. When she had reposed herself a little, I snatched her up again, and proceeded onwards with all the haste imaginable, in the determination to strike at once into the mountains ; but recollecting that I had the river of Ashtarek to cross, and that with her in my arms it would be impossible to do so except by the bridge, I at once directed my steps thither.

‘We were reposing at the foot of the bridge, when I heard the footsteps of your horses. Although nearly exhausted with my previous exertions, I still had strength enough left to clamber up the bank, and take refuge in the ruined church, where you first discovered us ; and there I watched your motions with the greatest anxiety, concluding that you were a party sent in pursuit of us by the serdar. Need I say after this, that if you will protect us, and permit us to seek our home, you will receive the overflowing gratitude of two thankful hearts, and the blessings of many now wretched people, who by our return will be made supremely happy ? Whoever you are, upon whatever errand you may be sent, you cannot have lost the feelings of a man. God will repay your kindness a thousand times ; and although we are not of your faith and nation, still we have prayers to put up at the throne of grace, which must be received when they are employed in so good a cause.’

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Sequel of the foregoing history, and of the resolution which Hajji Baba takes in consequence.

The Armenian youth here finished his narrative, and left me in astonishment and admiration at all he had related. With my permission he then quitted me to visit his wife, and promised to return immediately with the report of her present state, and how she felt after her repose.

‘He surely cannot have been inventing lies to my face all this time,’ said I when left to myself ; ‘for a bleeding woman is here in evidence to corroborate what he has advanced ; but then, should I permit him to proceed, and the serdar was to hear that I had done so, what would become of me ? I should

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

certainly lose my place, and perhaps my ears. No ; compassion does not suit me ; for if it did, I ought not to remain a nasakchi. I will stick to what the sage Locman, I believe, once said on this occasion, which runs something to this purpose :—" If you are a tiger, be one altogether ; for then the other beasts will know what to trust to : but if you wear a tiger's skin, and long ears are discovered to be concealed therein, they will then treat you even worse than if you walked about in your own true character, an undisguised ass."

I kept turning over in my mind whether I should release him or not ; and was fluctuating in great perplexity between the ass and the tiger, when Yûsûf returned. He told me that his Mariam was considerably refreshed by repose ; but, weak from loss of blood, and stiff by the violence of the contusions which she had received (in particular, one upon her leg, which was of consequence), it would be impossible for her to move for several days ; 'except, indeed, we were pursued by the serdar,' added he, 'when I believe nothing but force could hinder us from proceeding.' He said that not until now had she found strength enough to relate her own adventures from the time she had left him at Gaymishlû.

It appears, that the instant she had darted from the nuptial chamber, only covered by her veil, she had been seized by a Persian, who, discovering by the glare of the lightning that she was young and handsome, ran off with her to some distance, and there detained her, until, with the assistance of another, she was mounted on a horse and taken forcibly away ; that these two men carried her straight to the camp at Aberan, and offered her for sale to the serdar ; who having agreed to take her, ordered her to be conducted to his seraglio at Erivan, and there put into service ; that the horrid plight in which she stood, when exhibited to the serdar, her disfigured looks, and her weak and drooping state, made her hope that she would remain unnoticed and neglected ; particularly when she heard what was his character, and to what extent he carried his cruelties on the unfortunate victims of his selfishness. Mariam, alluding to herself, then said, 'Hoping, by always talking of myself as a married woman, that I should meet with more respect in the house of a Mussulman, than if I were otherwise, I never lost an opportunity of putting my husband's name forward ; and this succeeded, for little or no notice was taken

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

of me, and I was confounded with the other slaves, and performed the different tasks of servitude which were set me. But, unfortunately, I did not long keep my own counsel: I confided my story to a Persian woman, who pretended to be my friend; hoping by that means to soften her heart so much as to induce her to help me in regaining my freedom; but she proved treacherous; she made a merit of relating it to the serdar, who immediately forced me to confirm her words with my own lips, and then the extent of my imprudence became manifest. He announced his intention to avail himself of my situation, and ordered me to prepare for receiving him. Conceive, then, what were the horrors of my position. I turned over in my mind every means of escape; but all avenues to it were shut. I had never before thought of looking over the precipice upon which the windows of our prison opened; but now I seriously thought of precipitating myself, rather than submit to the tyrant. But a few hours after I had had the blessing to discover you on the bridge, I had been ordered to hold myself in readiness to receive him; and it was then that I had positively determined in my own mind to throw myself headlong out, either once more to be joined to you, or to die in the attempt. When I shut the lattices in haste, several women had just come into the room to conduct me to the hot-bath previously to being dressed; and when I had made some excuse for delaying it, and had sent them out of the room, it was then that I opened the lattice a second time, and put my resolution into practice.'

Yûsûf having finished the recital of his and his wife's adventures, was very anxious to know what part I would take, and earnestly entreated me to befriend him by my advice and assistance.

The morning was far spent. My men were already mounted, and ready to proceed on our reconnoitring expedition, and my horse was waiting for me, when a thought struck me, which would settle every difficulty with regard to the young Armenian and his wife.

I called him to me and said, 'After what you have related, it will be impossible to leave you at liberty. You have, by your own account, run off with a woman from the serdar's seraglio, a crime which you, perhaps, do not know, in a Mussulman country, is punished with death, so sacred is the

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

harem held in our estimation. If I were to act right, I ought not to lose a moment in sending you both back to Erivan ; but that I will not do, provided you agree to join us in our present expedition, and to serve us as guide in those parts of the country with which you are best acquainted.' I then explained to him the nature of my office, and what was the object of the expedition.

'If you are zealous in our cause,' said I, 'you will then have performed a service which will entitle you to reward, and thus enable me to speak in your favour to the serdar and to my chief, and, *Inshallah!* please God, to procure your release. In the meanwhile, your wife may remain here, in all safety, in the hands of the good folks of this village ; and by the time we return, she will, I hope, have been restored to health.'

The youth, upon hearing this language, took my hand and kissed it, agreed to everything I had said, and, having girt on his arms, he was ready to attend us. I permitted him to go to his wife, to give her an account of this arrangement, and to console her, with proper assurances, that they would soon be restored to each other. He again thanked me ; and, with the agility of an antelope, had already gained the summit of the first hill before we had even begun to ascend it.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The Armenian Yûsûf proves himself worthy of Hajji Baba's confidence.

WE proceeded towards the Georgian frontier, shaping our track over unfrequented parts of the mountains, in which we were very materially assisted by Yûsûf, who appeared to be acquainted with every landmark, and who knew the directions of places with a precision that quite surprised us. He did not seem anxious to visit his own village ; and, in fact, he assured me, that, had he even permission so to do, he could not, because he felt himself bound by the oath which he had taken upon last quitting it, not to return, except accompanied by his wife.

The intelligence which had been brought to the serdar of the advance of the Moscovites proved false ; for we found

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

them posted on the banks of the Pembaki river, occupying the village of Hamamlû, and fortifying themselves in Karaklisseh. We were not far from the former place ; and, as we approached it, I became anxious to acquire some precise intelligence concerning the numbers and the dispositions of the enemy. A thought struck me, as I pondered over the fate of my Armenian protégé—‘I will either save this youth, or lose him,’ thought I ; ‘and never was there a better opportunity than the present. He shall go to Hamamlû : if he brings me the intelligence we want, nothing can prevent me from procuring both his pardon and his wife for him—if he proves a traitor, I get rid of him, and demand a reward from the serdar, for restoring his fugitive slave.’

I called him to me, and proposed the undertaking. Quicker than thought, he seized all the different bearings of the question, and without hesitation accepted of my proposal. He girt himself afresh, he tucked the skirts of his coat into his girdle, putting his cap on one side, and slinging his long gun at his back, he darted down the mountain’s side, and we very soon lost him amid the sloping woods.

‘*Ruft ke ruft*. He is gone and doubly gone,’ said the young delikhan ; ‘we shall never see him again.’

‘And why should he not return ?’ said I. ‘Have we not got a hostage ? Armenian though he is, he will not leave his wife.’

‘Yes,’ said the youth, ‘he is an Armenian ; but he is also an Isauvi (a Christian). The Russians, too, are Isauvis ; and we all know, that when these infidels get together, they will rather die than return to the sons of Islam. No ; were he the chaste Joseph himself, and his wife Zuleikha in person, I will bet this horse,’ pointing to the beast under him, ‘that we see him no more.’

‘Do not coin false words, my little gentleman,’ said a sturdy old cavalier, whose sunburnt face was harrowed by a thousand wrinkles, and shaded by a shaggy beard, mustachios, and eyebrows :—‘why, without any use, do you eat dirt ? The horse is the Shah’s, not yours ; and do you pretend to make the *bahs* (bets) upon it ?’

‘The Shah’s property is mine, and mine is my own,’ retorted the youth.

I and my party kept up this sort of desultory talk for a little

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

while before we thought of settling ourselves, when, seeing a spot where there was much grass, we made for it, and dismounted from our horses. We dispersed ourselves here and there, each making a temporary establishment of horse-cloths and cloaks spread upon the ground ; whilst our steeds, picketed among the grass, fed at pleasure. I announced my intention of passing the night here in case Yûsûf did not appear before its close ; and preparatory to this, two of our best marauders set off in quest of a sheep, fowls, or anything they could get for our evening's meal. After an hour's absence, they returned with a sheep which they had seized from a flock grazing in the neighbourhood of the river. It was soon killed, and preparations were made for roasting it. Two stakes with hooks at the top were cut from the forest and stuck into the ground ; then a long stick was passed through the animal in lieu of a spit, and placed on the hooks. A fire having been lighted, one of our men was stationed near it to turn the animal at intervals ; and it was not long before it was ready for eating. By way of variety, some of the prime bits, with the fat of the tail, were cut off, spitted upon a ramrod, and thus roasted. The sheep was served up on its stake, and our party fell upon it with an intense appetite, whilst, by way of distinction, the ramrod was handed over to me for my share.

By this time the day had entirely closed in, and Yûsûf had not appeared. We then composed ourselves to sleep, leaving one or two to keep watch and to attend upon the horses. About an hour after midnight, when the moon was about going down, a distant shout was heard—presently a second, more distinctly and nearer to us. We were immediately upon the alert, and the shouts being repeated, we could no longer doubt but that the Armenian was at hand. We then shouted in return, and not very long after we saw him appear. He was almost exhausted with fatigue, but still strong enough to be able to relate his adventures since he had left us.

He informed me, that, having reached Hamamlû, he was recognised by some of the Russian soldiers who had escaped the attack of the Persians upon his village, and who immediately introduced him into the fort, and treated him very kindly. He was taken before the commanding officer, who questioned him narrowly upon the object of his visit ; but the ready pretext which he advanced, of seeking his wife, answered every

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

difficulty ; besides which, the ruin of his village, the destruction of his family property, and the acquaintances which he had on the spot, furnished him with so much matter of conversation, that no suspicion of his designs could be entertained. He was then permitted to walk about the fort ; and by asking his questions with prudence, and making his own observations, was enabled to furnish me with the information I required on the strength and position of the enemy, with some very good conjectures on the nature and probability of their future operations. He then managed to slip away unperceived before the gates of the place were closed, and regained the mountains without the smallest impediment.

Having permitted Yûsûf to refresh himself with food and rest, and being now perfectly satisfied that his story was true, and that all confidence might be placed in his integrity, I ordered my party to hold themselves in readiness to return to Erivan. He was permitted to ride behind either of the horsemen when tired with walking ; and in this manner, taking the shortest cuts over the mountains, we regained the village of Ashtarek. Whilst we stopped here to refresh ourselves and horses, and to gain intelligence of the movements of the serdar and the chief executioner, I permitted the youth to visit his wife. He returned beaming with joy, for he had found her almost cured of her bruises, and full of thanks for the kindness and hospitality with which she had been treated.

The serdar and the chief executioner had moved from Erivan, and were now encamped close to the residence of the Armenian patriarch ; and thither we bent our steps, accompanied by Yûsûf.

CHAPTER XL

Hajji Baba gives an account of his proceedings to his superiors, and shows himself a friend to the distressed.

THE monastery of Etchmiazin, so called in the Armenian tongue, or Utch Klisseh, or the Three Churches, by the Turks and Persians, is situated in a large and well-cultivated plain, watered by the Araxes, and several smaller streams. It stands

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

at the foot of the high mountain of Agri Dagh, which the Christians, and in particular the Armenians, hold in great veneration, because (so Yûsûf informed me) upon its conspicuous snow-capped summit the ark of Noah rested. The monastery and church, celebrated throughout Asia for the riches which they contain, are enclosed within high walls, and secured by strong and massive gates. It is here that the head of the Armenian church constantly resides, together with a large retinue of bishops, priests, and deacons, who form the stock which provides clergy for most of the Armenian churches in Asia. The title by which he is known in Persia is *khalifeh* or caliph, a designation which, comprising the head of the civil as well as the religious government, the Mussulmans used formerly to bestow on the sovereigns who held their sway at Bagdad and elsewhere. By the Christians he is generally known by the name of patriarch, and his church is an object of pilgrimage for the Armenians, who flock there at particular seasons in great numbers from different parts of the world.

Hither we bent our steps. We discovered the united camps of the serdar and the chief executioner, spreading their white tents in an irregular figure all round the monastery; and before we had reached its walls, we heard that the two chiefs had taken up their abode within it, and were the guests of the caliph.

‘We’ll burn the fathers of these *giaours*’ (infidels), said the young delikhan, as he rode up to me in great joy at this intelligence, ‘and will make up for the fatigues we have undergone, by drinking abundantly of their wine.’

‘Are you a Mussulman,’ said I, ‘and talk of drinking wine? You yourself will become a *giaour*.’

‘Oh, as for that,’ answered he, ‘the serdar drinks wine like any Christian, and I do not see why I should not.’

As we approached the monastery, I called Yûsûf to me, and told him to be in readiness whenever he should be called for, and be prepared to confirm any oath that I might think it necessary to take for his interests. He was particularly enjoined, when he came to talk of the services he had rendered, to deviate from the truth as much as he chose, to set forth every sort of danger he had or had not incurred, and in particular to score up an account of sums expended, all for the use and advantage of the serdar and of the Shah’s government.

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

‘I hope at that rate,’ said I to him, ‘your accounts may be balanced, by having your wife restored to you ; for which, after considerable difficulty, you may agree to give a receipt in full of all demands.’

Thus agreed, we passed through the heavy archway which leads into the first court of the monastery. This we found encumbered by the equipages and servants of the serdar and the chief executioner. Here and there were strings of horses picketed by ropes and pegs, with their grooms established in different corners among their saddles and horse furniture ; and a corner was taken up by a set of mules, distinguished by the eternal jingle of their bells, and the no less eternal wranglings of their drivers.

In the second yard were the horses of the chief servants, who themselves inhabited small rooms that surrounded two sides of the court.

We alighted at the first court, and I immediately inquired for the quarters of my master, the chief executioner. It was noon, and I was informed he was then with the serdar, before whom, in all the boots, dust, and dirt of my travelling dress, I was immediately conducted.

They seemed to have entirely taken possession of the Armenian sanctuary, and to have dispossessed the caliph of his place and authority ; for they had taken up their abode in his very rooms, whilst the poor priests were skulking about with humble and downcast looks, as if fearful and ashamed of being the lawful inhabitants of their own possessions. The favourite horses of both the Persian chiefs were picketed close to the very walls of the church, more care being taken of their comforts than of the convenience of the Armenians.

My reader is already acquainted with the person and character of the chief executioner ; and, before I proceed further, I must also make him acquainted with the serdar. A man of a more sinister aspect was never seen. His eyes, which, in the common expression of his countenance, were like opaque bits of glass, glared terribly whenever he became animated, and almost started out of their old shrivelled sockets ; and when this happened, it was always remarked that a corresponding smile broke out upon his mouth, which made the Shah’s poet say, that Hassan Khan’s face was like *Agri dagh*, the mountain near which he lived. When clouded at the top,

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

and the sun shone in the plain, a storm was sure to ensue. Time had worn two deep wrinkles down his cheeks, which were not hid by a scanty beard, notwithstanding all the pains he took to make it thick ; and the same enemy having despoiled him of all his teeth save one, which projected from his mouth, had produced deep cavities, that made the shaggy hairs, thinly spread over them, look like burnt stubble on the slopes of a valley. Altogether, it was difficult to say whether the goat or the tiger was most predominant ; but this is most certain, that never was the human form so nearly allied to that of the brute as in this instance. His character corresponded to his looks ; for no law, human or divine, ever stood in the way of his sensuality ; and when his passions were roused, he put no bounds to his violence and cruelty. But with all this, he had several qualities, which attached his followers to him. He was liberal and enterprising ; he had much quickness and penetration, and acted so politically towards the Shah and his government, that he was always treated with the greatest confidence and consideration. He lived in princely magnificence ; was remarkable for his hospitality, and making no mystery of his irregularity as a Mussulman ; was frank and open in his demeanour, affable to his inferiors, and the very best companion to those who shared in his debaucheries. No bolder drinker of wine existed in Persia, except, perhaps, his present companion, the executioner, who, as long as he could indulge without incurring the Shah's displeasure, had ratified an eternal treaty of alliance between his mouth and every skin of wine that came within his reach.

It was before these two worshipful personages that I was introduced, followed by two or three of my principal attendants. I stood at the end of the apartment until I was spoken to.

‘You are welcome,’ said the chief executioner. ‘Hajji, by my soul, tell me how many Russians have you killed ? Have you brought a head—let me see ?’

Here the serdar took him up, and said, ‘What have you done ? What Russians are on the frontier ? and when shall we get at them ?’

To all of which I answered, after making the usual prefatory speech, ‘Yes, Agas, I have done all that was in my power to do.’ It was a lucky hour when we set off, for everything that you wish to know I can explain ; and it is evident

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

that the destinies of the serdar and of my master are much on the rise, since so insignificant a slave as I can be of use to them.'

'Good luck is no bad thing, that's true,' said the serdar; 'but we trust a great deal to our swords, too,'—rolling his eyes about at the same time, and smiling in the face of the chief executioner.

'Yes, yes,' said his companion, 'swords and gunpowder, spears and pistols—those are our astrologers. It will always be a fortunate hour that will bring me within slice of an infidel's neck. As for me, I am a *kizzel bash* (a red head), and pretend to nothing else. A good horse, a sharp sword, a spear in my hand, and a large *maidan* (an open space) before me, with plenty of Muscovites in it: that is all I want.'

'And what do you say to good wine, too?' said the serdar. 'I think that is as good a thing as any you have mentioned. We'll have the caliph in, and make him give Hajji a cup of his best. But tell us first,' addressing himself to me, 'what have you seen and done? where are the Russians posted? how many of them are there? have they any guns? who commands them? where are their Cossacks? have you heard anything of the Georgians? where is the Russian commander-in-chief? what are the Lesgî about? where is the renegade Ismael Khan? Come, tell us all; and you, mirza,' addressing himself to his scribe, 'write down all he says.'

Upon this I drew myself up, and, putting on a face of wisdom, I made the following speech:—

'By the soul of the serdar! by the salt of the chief executioner! the Muscovites are nothing. In comparison to the Persians they are mere dogs. I, who have seen with my own eyes, can tell you, that one Persian with a spear in his hand, would kill ten of those miserable beardless creatures.'

'Ah, you male lion!' exclaimed my master, apparently delighted with what I said, 'I always knew that you would be something. Leave an Ispahani alone: he will always show his good sense.'

'They are but few Muscovites on the frontier. Five, six, seven, or eight hundred—perhaps a thousand or two thousand—but certainly not more than three. They have some ten, twenty, or thirty guns; and as for the Cossacks, *pûrch and*, they are nothing. It is very inconvenient that they are to be

found everywhere when least wanted, with those thick spears of theirs, which look more like the goad of an ox than a war-like weapon, and they kill, 'tis true; but then, they are mounted upon *yabous* (jades), which can never come up to our horses, worth thirty, forty, fifty tomauns each, and which are out of sight before they can even get theirs into a gallop.'

'Why do you waste your breath upon the Cossacks and their horses?' said the chief executioner: 'you might as well talk of monkeys mounted upon bears. Who commands the infidels?'

'They call him the *deli mayor*, or the mad major; and the reason why he is called so is, because he never will run away. Stories without number are related of him. Among others, that he has got the pocket Koran of his excellency the serdar in his possession, which he shows to every one as a great trophy.'

'Ay, that's true,' exclaimed the serdar. 'These bankrupt dogs surprised me last year, when encamped not five parasangs hence, and I had only time to save myself in my shirt and trowsers, on the back of an unsaddled horse. Of course, they pillaged my tent, and, among other things, stole my Koran. But I'll be even with them. I have shown them what I can do at Gavmishlû, and we still have much more to perform upon their fathers' graves. How many guns did you say they had?'

'Four or five, or six,' said I.

'I wrote down twenty or thirty just now,' remarked the mirza, who was writing at the edge of the carpet,—'which of the two is right?'

'Why do you tell us lies?' exclaimed the serdar, his eyes becoming more animated as he spoke. 'If we find that any part of what you say be false, by the head of Ali! you will soon discover that our beards are not to be laughed at with impunity.'

'In truth, then,' said I, 'this intelligence is not of my own acquiring. The greatness of the serdar's and my aga's good fortune consists in my having fallen upon a means of getting the most perfect information through a young Armenian, who risked his life for us, upon my making him a promise of recompense in the name of the serdar.'

'A recompense in my name!' exclaimed the serdar: 'who

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

is this Armenian?—and what Armenian was ever worthy of a recompense?’

Upon this I related the whole of Yûsûf’s history, from the beginning to the end. In pleading his cause in this public manner, I hoped that the serdar would feel it impossible to resist the justice of the demand which I made upon him, and that my young protégé would at once be released from his fears and apprehensions of the chief’s resentment, and restored to the undisputed possession of his wife.

When I had done speaking, nothing was said, but here and there *Allah! Allah! il Allah!* (there is but one God!) in suppressed exclamations from the lips of the Mohammedans present; whilst the serdar, having rolled his eyes about, and twitched his mouth into various odd shapes, at length mumbled out, ‘The Armenian has performed wonders’; and then called aloud to his servants to bring his *kaliân* or pipe.

Having smoked two or three long whiffs, he said, ‘Where is this Armenian? Order the caliph also to come before us.’

Upon which Yûsûf was ushered in, with the shoves and thrusts by which a poor man of his nation is generally introduced before a Persian grandee; and he stood in face of the assembly as fine a specimen of manly beauty as was ever seen, evidently creating much sensation upon all present by the intrepidity of his appearance. The serdar, in particular, fixed his eyes upon him with looks of approbation; and, turning round to the executioner-in-chief, made signs, well known among Persians, of his great admiration.

The caliph, a heavy, coarse man, of a rosy and jovial appearance, dressed in the black hood peculiar to the Armenian clergy, appeared soon after, followed by two or three of his priests. Having stood for a short time before the serdar and his companion, he was invited to sit, which he did, not without going through all the ceremonial of complimentary phrases, and covering the feet and hands in a manner usual on such occasions.

The serdar then, addressing himself to the caliph, said, ‘It is plain that we Mussulmans are become less than dogs in the land of Irân. The Armenians now break into our harems, steal our wives and slaves from before our faces, and invite men to defile our fathers’ graves. What news is this, O caliph? Is this Allah’s work or yours?’

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

The caliph, attacked in this unexpected manner, looked very much alarmed, and the dew broke out upon his ample and porous forehead. Experience had taught him that these sorts of attacks were generally the forerunners of some heavy fine, and he already put himself in a posture of defence to resist it.

‘What language is this?’ said he in answer. ‘We, whose dogs are we, who should dare even to think upon the evil of which your highness speaks? We are the Shah’s subjects:—you are our protector, and the Armenians sit in peace under your shade. What manner of man is this who has brought these ashes upon our heads?’

‘That is he,’ answered the serdar, pointing to Yûsûf. ‘Say, fellow, have you stolen my slave or not?’

‘If I am guilty,’ said the youth, ‘of having taken aught from any man, save my own, here am I, ready to answer for myself with my life. She who threw herself out of your windows into my arms was my wife before she was your slave. We are both the Shah’s rayats, and it is best known to yourself if you can enslave them or no. We are Armenians, ’tis true, but we have the feelings of men. It is well known to all Persia, that our illustrious Shah has never forced the harem of even the meanest of his subjects; and, secure in that feeling, how could I ever suppose, most noble serdar, that we should not receive the same protection under your government? You were certainly deceived when told that she was a Georgian prisoner; and had you known that she was the wife of one of your peasantry, you never would have made her your property.’

The caliph, frightened at the language of the youth, stopped him, by loud and angry exclamation; but the serdar, apparently struck by language so unusual to his ears, instead of appearing angry, on the contrary, looked delighted (if the looks of such a countenance could ever express delight); and, staring with astonished eyes upon the youth, seemed to forget even the reason of his having been brought before him. Of a sudden, as if dispelling his former indignation, he stopped all further discussion, by saying to him, ‘Enough, enough; go take your wife, and say no more; and, since you have rendered us a service at Hamamlû, you shall remain my servant, and wait upon my person. Go, my head valet will instruct you in your duties; and when attired in clothes suited to your situa-

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

tion, you will return again to our presence. Go, and recollect that my condescension towards you depends upon your future conduct.' Upon this Yûsûf, in the fulness of his heart, ran up to him with great apparent gratitude, fell upon his knees, and kissed the hem of his garment, not knowing what to say, or what countenance to keep upon such unlooked-for good fortune.

Every one present seemed astonished : the chief executioner gave a shrug, and indulged in a deep yawn ; the caliph, as if he had been disencumbered of a heavy weight, stretched his limbs, and the huge drops that were before glittering on his brow now disappeared, and his face again expanded into good-humour. All congratulated the serdar upon his humanity and benevolence, and compared him to the celebrated Noushirwan. *Barikallah* and *Mashallah* was repeated and echoed from mouth to mouth, and the story of his magnanimity was spread abroad, and formed the talk of the whole camp. I will not pretend to explain what were the serdar's real sentiments ; but those who well knew the man were agreed, that he could be actuated by no generous motive.

CHAPTER XLI

He describes an expedition against the Russians, and does ample justice to the cowardice of his chief.

MY chief and the serdar having acquired all the information which Yûsûf and I could give them upon the force and position of the Muscovites, it was determined that an attack should immediately be made, and the army was ordered to march upon Hamamlû.

Everything was soon in motion ; the artillery began its tedious and difficult march through the mountains ; the infantry made their way in the best manner they could, and the cavalry were seen in unconnected groups all over the plain. I must not omit to say, that before the march began I received a visit from the Armenian. He was no longer, in appearance, the rude mountaineer with his rough sheep's skin cap, his short Georgian tunic, his sandalled feet, his long knife hung

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

over his knee, and his gun slung obliquely across his body ; but he was now attired in a long vest of crimson velvet, trimmed with gold lace and gold buttons ; a beautiful Cashmerian shawl was tied gracefully round his waist ; his small cap, of Bokhara lamb's skin, was duly indented at the top, and the two long curls behind his ears were combed out with all proper care. He had now more the appearance of a woman than a man, so much were his fine limbs hid by his robes ; and as he approached me, he could not help blushing and looking awkward at the metamorphosis. He thanked me with expressions that indicated much gratitude, and assured me, that so far from having expected this result to his interview with the serdar, he had, in fact, made up his mind to the loss of both his wife and life, and therefore had spoken with the boldness of one determined to die. 'But,' said he, 'notwithstanding this great change in my fortunes, this new existence of mine will never do. I cannot endure the degradation of being a mere idle appendage to the state of the serdar ; and be not angry if, ere long, I decline the honour of his service. I will submit to everything as long as my wife is not in a place of safety ; but when once I have secured that, then adieu. Better live a swineherd in the Georgian mountains, naked and houseless, than in all these silks and velvets, a despised hanger-on, be it even in the most luxurious court of Persia.'

I could not help applauding such sentiments, although I should have been happy had he made any one else his confidant, conscious that if he did run away I should in some measure be made answerable for him.

In the meanwhile the army proceeded on its march. As we passed Ashtarek, Yûsûf got permission to take possession of Mariam, who, now transformed into the wife of one who had the reputation of being in the good graces of the serdar, travelled with great respectability and consideration on horseback, and formed one among the numerous camp-followers that are always attached to a Persian army. The camp was pitched between Gavmishlû and Aberan, where all that was not necessary for the expedition was ordered to remain until its return. It was settled that the serdar and the chief executioner, each accompanied by their own men, with two pieces of artillery, should form the expedition, and towards the close of the evening it set off.

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

As we approached the scene of action, the serdar became impatient of delay, and, like every Persian who despises the utility of infantry, expressed his wish to push on with the cavalry. I will not say as much for the impatience of my chief. He continued his boastings to the last, 'tis true, and endeavoured to make every one believe that he had only to appear, and the enemy would instantly be seized with a panic; but at length he ceded to the serdar's wishes of bringing on the rear-guard, whilst the latter pushed on to Hamamlû with the main body of the cavalry. I, of course, remained behind, to act under the orders of my chief. The serdar intended to reach Hamamlû before break of day in order to surprise the gates, and deviated from the road to ford the Pembaki river. We continued our march straight for that place, and were to appear as the day dawned, to give a retreat to the serdar, in case he should be beaten back.

The morning had just broke when we reached the banks of the river. The chief executioner was surrounded by a body of about five hundred cavalry, and the infantry was coming up as well as it could. We were about fording the river, when of a sudden we were accosted by a voice on the other side, which shouting out two or three strange words in a language unknown to us, explained their meaning by a musket shot. This stopped our career, and called the attention of our chief, who came up looking paler than death.

'What's the news?' exclaimed he, in a voice far below its usual pitch:—'what are we doing?—where are we going?—Hajji Baba,' accosting me, 'was it you that fired?'

'No,' said I, catching rather more of his apprehension than was convenient; 'no, I did not fire. Perhaps there are ghôls here among the Muscovites, as well as at Ashtarek among the Armenians.'

In another minute more barbarous cries were heard, and another shot was fired, and by this time day had sufficiently advanced to show two men, on the other bank, whom we discovered to be Russian soldiers. As soon as our chief saw the extent of the danger, and the foe opposed to us, his countenance cleared up, and he instantly put on the face of the greatest resolution and vigour. 'Go, seize, strike, kill!' he exclaimed, almost in one breath, to those around him:—'Go, bring me the heads of yonder two fellows.'



The two Russians drive back the Persians.

Immediately several men dashed into the river, with drawn swords, whilst the two soldiers withdrew to a small rising ground, and, placing themselves in a convenient position, began a regular, though alternate, discharge of their muskets upon their assailants, with a steadiness that surprised us. They killed two men, which caused the remainder to retreat back to our commander, and no one else seemed at all anxious to follow their example. In vain he swore, entreated, pushed, and offered money for their heads : not one of his men would advance. At length, he said, with a most magnanimous shout, 'I myself will go : here, make way ! will nobody follow me ?' Then, stopping, and addressing himself to me, he said, 'Hajji ! my soul, my friend, won't you go and cut those men's heads off ? I'll give you everything you can ask.' Then putting his hand round my neck, he said, 'Go, go ; I am sure you can cut their heads off.'

We were parleying in this manner, when a shot from one of the Russians hit the chief executioner's stirrup, which awoke his fears to such a degree, that he immediately fell to uttering the most violent oaths. Calling away his troops, and retreating himself at a quick pace, he exclaimed, 'Curses be on their beards ! Curse their fathers, mothers, their ancestry, and posterity ! Whoever fought after this fashion ? Killing, killing, as if we were so many hogs. See, see, what animals they are ! They will not run away do all you can to them. They are worse than brutes : — brutes have feeling, — they have none. O Allah, Allah, if there was no dying in the case, how the Persians would fight !'

By this time we had proceeded some distance, and then halted. Our chief, expecting to find the Russians back to back under every bush, did not know what course to pursue, when the decision was soon made for us by the appearance of the serdar, who, followed by his cavalry, was seen retreating in all haste from before the enemy. It was evident that his enterprise had entirely failed, and nothing was left for the whole army but to return whence it came.

I will not attempt to draw a picture of the miserable aspect of the serdar's troops : they all looked harassed and worn down by fatigue, and seemed so little disposed to rally, that one and all, as if by tacit consent, proceeded straight on their course homewards without once looking back. But as much

as they were depressed in spirits, in the same degree were raised those of our commander. He so talked of his prowess, of the wound he had received, and of his intended feats, that at length, seizing a spear, he put his horse at the full gallop, and overtaking his own cook, who was making the best of his way to his pots and pans, darted it at him, in the exuberance of his valour, and actually pierced him in the back through his shawl girdle.

Thus ended an expedition which the serdar expected would have given him a great harvest of glory and of Muscovites' heads; and which, the chief executioner flattered himself, would afford him exultation and boasting for the remainder of his life. But notwithstanding its total failure, still he had ingenuity enough to discover matter for self-congratulation.

Surrounded by a circle of his adherents, amongst whom I was one, he was in the midst of a peal of boasting, when a message came from the serdar, requesting that Hajjî Baba might be sent to him. I returned with the messenger, and the first words which the serdar said, upon my appearing before him, were, 'Where is Yûsûf? Where is his wife?'

It immediately occurred to me that they had escaped; and putting on one of my most innocent looks, I denied having the least knowledge of their movements.

The serdar then began to roll his eyeballs about, and to twist up his mouth into various shapes. Passion burst from him in the grossest and most violent expressions: he vowed vengeance upon him, his race, his village, and upon everything and everybody in the least connected with him; and whilst he expressed a total disbelief of all my protestations of ignorance, he gave me to understand, that if I was found to have been in the smallest degree an accessory to his escape, he would use all his influence to sweep my vile person from the face of the earth.

I afterwards heard that he had sent a party of men to Gavmishlû, to seize and bring before him Yûsûf's parents and kindred, with everything that belonged to them; to take possession of their property, and to burn and destroy whatever they could not bring away: but the sagacious and active youth had foreseen this, and had taken his measures with such prudence and promptitude, that he had completely baffled the tyrant. He, his wife, his wife's relations, his own parents and family, with all their effects (leaving only their tilled ground be-

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

hind them), had concerted one common plan of migration into the Russian territory. It had fully succeeded, as I afterwards heard, for they were received with great kindness, both by the government and by their own sect; lands were allotted, and every help afforded them for the re-establishment of their losses.

CHAPTER XLII

He proceeds to the king's camp, and gives a specimen of lying
on a grand scale.

I RETURNED to my chief full of apprehension at the threat which I had received; and knowing how very tenacious all our great men are of power over their own servants, I did not fail immediately to inform him of the language which the serdar had entertained me with. He became furious, and I had only to fan the flame which I had raised in order to create a quarrel between them; but, having more fears about the serdar's power of hurting me than I had confidence in the ability of the chief executioner to protect me, I thought it best for all parties that I should retire from the scene, and craved my master's permission to return to Tehran. Pleased with an opportunity of showing the serdar that nobody but himself could control his servants, he at once assented to my proposal; and forthwith began to give me instructions concerning what I should say to the grand vizier touching the late expedition, and particularly in what light I was to place his own individual prowess.

'You yourself were there, Hajji,' said he to me, 'and therefore can describe the whole action as well as I could. We cannot precisely say that we gained a victory, because, alas! we have no heads to show; but we also were not defeated. The serdar, ass that he is, instead of waiting for the artillery, and availing himself of the infantry, attacks a walled town with his cavalry only, and is very much surprised that the garrison shut their gates and fire at him from the ramparts: of course he can achieve nothing, and retires in disgrace. Had I been your leader, things would have gone otherwise; and as it was, I was the only man who came hand to hand with the enemy. I was wounded in a desperate manner; and had it not been